



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Shepard Building
255 Westminster Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-3400

NEWS RELEASE

Contacts:

Elliot Krieger, Communications, Rhode Island Dept. of Education – (401) 222-8471

Pat Ross, Communications, Measured Progress – (603) 749-9102 ext. 2157

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Maine Joins R.I., N.H., and Vermont in NECAP Testing Partnership

Maine has joined Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and Vermont as the fourth member of the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP), the first and only multistate testing partnership formed in response to the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

As the newest NECAP partner, Maine will join the other three member states in developing and administering the NECAP tests in reading, writing, and mathematics to all students in grades 3 through 8. The tests are developed in common by all partner states and are aligned with the state standards (what all students should know and be able to do at each grade level) that all NECAP states have adopted.

The results of the tests, which are required by NCLB, determine whether schools have made Adequate Yearly Progress and what actions state agencies will initiate to assist in improving student performance.

Teachers from the NECAP states are involved in the development of the test items and set the standards for scoring the tests. The states administer the tests each October. Measured Progress, of Dover, N.H., produces, distributes, collects, and scores the tests and issues resulting reports, under the terms of a multistate contract that runs through the end of 2014.

With Maine as a member of the NECAP partnership, all states will benefit from a lower per-pupil cost for the test administration. The addition of the expertise of Maine educators will allow the NECAP partner states to maintain the high quality of the NECAP tests, even in a time of diminishing funds.

“Through the NECAP partnership, we have developed clear and rigorous standards in English and mathematics, and we have implemented a fair yet challenging assessment system,” said Governor Donald L. Carcieri. “With Maine now joining our partnership, we have taken a significant step toward establishing the New England states as the national leaders in education quality and innovation.”

Maine Governor John E. Baldacci said he sees the NECAP as the first step in building a collaborative approach to education in the New England states. “Our region has a reputation for being innovators in education,” he said. “We are leaders in work on standards and high-school reform. We can’t operate as individual states; our standards need to be at an international level to maximize the creativity, the knowledge base, and the resources of the four states if we are to be competitive globally.”

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“Maine has always been very excited about the NECAP but was unable to participate initially because of a required change in Maine statutes,” said Maine Education Commissioner Susan A. Gendron. “We are very appreciative of the three states’ willingness to have Maine join the partnership. The New England states are a lot more alike than different – we have similar standards and rigorous expectations. This will help us maximize the quality of education and share the expertise of our educators.”

“Maine was part of the original New England Compact that worked on common state standards. We are pleased to have them join with us as we move forward with our quality assessment program. It is important to remember that state assessment data is one piece of information that we use to document the progress of each child personally, physically, socially, and academically,” said New Hampshire Education Commissioner Lyonel Tracy. “Collaborative work is never easy, but it results in the best assessment possible for New Hampshire. I would like to thank my staff for their willingness to make this happen.”

“We are pleased that Maine has joined this important collaborative,” said Acting Vermont Education Commissioner Bill Talbott. “The development of this caliber of assessment would have been prohibitive if the states had worked individually. Maine’s participation will expand the resources, ideas, and expertise so the four New England states will enjoy a high-quality assessment for their students in mathematics and literacy.”

“We are proud to welcome Maine to the NECAP collaboration,” said Measured Progress Chief Executive Officer Stuart Kahl. “The four states share a profound dedication to the education of their students and a heritage of leadership in high-quality, rigorous student assessments. Maine educators will bring great commitment and resourcefulness to an already superior collaboration.”

The current contract between the NECAP states and Measured Progress will be modified, and precise cost figures have not yet been determined. Under the current contract, New Hampshire pays \$3.3 million per year, Rhode Island pays \$2.6 million, and Vermont pays \$1.8 million for English and mathematics tests in Grades 3 through 8 plus Grade 11. (The rates are determined in part by the number of tested students.)

Maine, which has used Measured Progress to develop its own state tests, will use NECAP tests in Grades 3 through 8 only and will continue to use the College Board SAT as its high-school assessment.

At this time, Maine has not joined the NECAP partnership on science tests, which is managed through a separate contract with Measured Progress. The four states have agreed to discuss establishing a four-state partnership for the science test.

The NECAP partnership originated in a series of discussions among New England states that began in 2002, shortly after NCLB, which required all states to expand their testing programs, became law. The NECAP contract with Measured Progress was signed in 2004, and the partner states administered the first NECAP tests in October 2005. Each member state posts information about the testing process and test results on its Web site.

In Rhode Island, see <http://www.ride.ri.gov/Assessment/default.aspx>